

For: FSA Employees

Informational Sessions and/or Training With Grant Recipients

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Field Operations



1 Overview

A Background

The Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Section 2501, Pub. L. 101-624, 7 U.S.C. 2279 established funding for outreach and assistance to SDA farmers and ranchers. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 expanded the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture (the Secretary) to provide awards under the program and transferred the administrative authority to USDA’s Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO). The Agriculture Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) further expanded the program to include outreach and assistance to veterans.

OASDVFR, also known as the “2501 Grant Program”, recipients have been announced, and may be accessed on the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site at <https://fsa.sc.egov.usda.gov/mgr/DAFO/Outreach>.

Throughout the year various other grants may be offered that impact potential partner organizations such as the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. When these announcements are made, an e-mail to the SED and State Outreach Coordinator (SOC) will be issued with a link to the names and the requirements to follow the provision of this notice.

22-AO requires FSA employees to build and strengthen partnerships with collaborators and stakeholder groups by conducting training and informational sessions on FSA programs and services.

Because of OASDVFR, USDA has the capacity to work closely with members of farming and ranching communities by funding projects that enhance the equitable participation of underserved veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs. These projects are intended to build lasting relationships between USDA and underserved veteran farmers and ranchers, to improve their ability to start and maintain successful agricultural businesses.

Disposal Date	Distribution
January 1, 2016	All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices

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1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice:

- informs employees of organizations who have received OASDVFR Grant Program funding to conduct outreach and technical assistance
- provides guidance on working with other USDA grant recipients
- informs employees of required meetings and suggested topics for State Offices to present at informational outreach sessions and/or training with USDA partners.

C Contact

If there are questions about this notice, State Offices shall contact Linda Cronin, Lead Outreach Program Manager, by either of the following:

- e-mail to linda.cronin@wdc.usda.gov
- telephone at 202-690-1699.

D Informational Session Overview

Informational sessions and/or training meetings with OASDVFR Grant Program recipient organizations shall be conducted by States before March 31 of each calendar year.

If States are already working with a partner, action is still required. Because program requirements often change, an annual meeting is required to provide updates. If a meeting was previously held during the current FY, and the required items have been covered, indicate accordingly on the report to DAFO. No additional meeting will be required.

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1 Overview (Continued)

D Informational Session Overview (Continued)

These sessions should cover a general overview of FSA programs. A sample agenda with suggested topics is provided in Exhibit 1. Suggested topics may vary and shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- obtaining an FSA farm number
- what clients can expect at their first Service Center visit
- types of farm programs and services offered
- types of farm loan assistance available
- farm loan borrower training requirements and technical assistance
- COC and STC
- outreach initiatives and successes
- County Office contacts
- GovDelivery
- receipt for service.

Note: Informational sessions and/or training meetings are not limited to OASDVFR grant recipient funded organizations, but are **required** for all OASDVFR grant funded organizations.

When other grant announcements are made, the SED and SOC will be notified by e-mail of the recipients and deadlines. The same information and reporting requirements will be required.

E List of OASDVFR Grant Recipient Organizations

In FY 2015, USDA's OAO granted new and supplemental awards to selected stakeholder groups, Community Based Organizations (CBO's), and educational institutions to provide outreach and technical assistance to underserved farmers and ranchers in 34 States, Puerto Rico, and the Federated States of Micronesia. The list of OASDVFR Grant recipients and USDA Program Liaisons may be accessed according to Exhibit 2 on the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site at <https://fsa.sc.egov.usda.gov/mgr/DAFO/Outreach>.

Note: No awards were made in FY 2013 for OASDVFR and there were no grant recipients in FY 2014.

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2 Other USDA Grantees and Local CBO's

A Overview

Many organizations receive funding from USDA to assist farmers and ranchers. Funds are awarded to groups by USDA Agencies, such as RMA, NIFA, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, AMS, NRCS, and RD. States are encouraged to partner with all CBO's and organizations on outreach activities, especially those funded by these agencies. An informational session with similar program topics may be used where feasible, and if required, an e-mail will be sent to SED's and SOC's and include the instructions provided in this notice and the link for accessing the grant recipients.

B List of Other Grantees

A list of other USDA OASDVFR-funded organizations authorized to conduct outreach and technical assistance on USDA programs is available and may be accessed according to Exhibit 3 on the Outreach SharePoint web site at <https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/mgr/DAFO/Outreach/default.aspx>.

3 Action

A County Office Action

County Offices shall continue to conduct outreach meetings with local partners and organizations. The annual informational sessions and/or training meetings shall be conducted by State Office staff at State Offices or other locations agreeable by grant recipients.

Note: Outreach funding is not available to conduct informational meetings. States shall use existing Federal and non-Federal administrative allotments to cover any necessary costs and expenses.

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3 Action (Continued)

B State Office Responsibilities

SED's shall ensure that:

- all OASDVFR-funded organizations located in their State are invited to an informational session conducted by State Office Outreach and Program Specialists or DD's using the example letter provided in Exhibit 3 by March 31 of each year
- all USDA OAO 1890 and 1994 Program Liaisons are invited to participate
- annual informational sessions are reported to DAFO by April 15 on the report in Exhibit 4

Notes: An electronic version is available on the SharePoint web site according to Exhibit 2

Negative reports are required.

- informational meetings and sessions are recorded in OTIS
- State and County Office Outreach coordinators provide a list of State OASDVFR grant recipient organizations to SDA farmers and ranchers who inquire about or require additional technical assistance.

Agenda of State Stakeholder Information Session and/or Workshop

The following is an example agenda of a State stakeholder information session and/or workshop.

State Office Stakeholder Informational Session

SED Welcome Agenda Overview

Staff/Partner Organization Introductions

SED and/or State Office Representative:

- County Office Structure and State Office Roles
- State Accomplishments Fact Sheet
- County Executive Director (CED) County Listing
- Farm Loan Manager (FLM)/FLP Headquarters Listing
- District Director (DD) Listing
- County Committee Role
- State Committee Role.

State Program Specialists:

- Current Programs (Overview)
- Guide to Farm Loan Programs (Provide Guide)
- County Committee Elections and Secretarial Appointments
- Underserved Assistance Programs
- Establishing Farm (Obtaining FSN)
- Understanding EM Designations
- Outreach Initiatives [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food, Compass Map, StrikeForce, People's Garden, Minority Farm Register, GovDelivery, USDA RegStats, Outreach SOS (Sharing Outreach Successes), USDA Advisory Committees, Community Needs Assessment Plans (language needs)]
- Partnership Agreements.

Agenda of State Stakeholder Information Session and/or Workshop (Continued)

USDA Liaison Officer:

- Role
- Responsibilities.

Partners:

- Partner Offerings (Types of Technical Assistance and/or Areas Covered)
- Goals
- Staff Contacts
- Questions.

List of OASDVFR Grant Recipient Organizations

The list of OASDVFR Grant recipients and USDA Program Liaisons are on the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site at <https://fsa.sc.egov.usda.gov/mgr/DAFO/Outreach>.

Under Documents, select:

- “Shared Documents”
- “USDA Grant Recipients”:
 - “FY2014 Grant Recipient List for OASDVFR Program”
 - “Grant Letter Template”
 - “Grant Recipient Information Report 2015”
 - “USDA Program Liaisons”.

FSA Letter to OASDVFR Grant Recipient Organizations

Following is an example letter for States to send to OASDVFR grant recipients. This template is available on the DAFO Outreach SharePoint web site according to Exhibit 2.

<p>Date</p> <p>Dear USDA Partner,</p> <p>The (insert State name) State Farm Service Agency has been informed of your selection as a (insert grant name) grant recipient. Through this grant, your organization will work alongside USDA agencies to provide outreach and technical assistance on USDA programs to SDA farmers and ranchers in our State.</p> <p>We invite you and your staff to attend a brief informational session on USDA’s Farm Service Agency programs and services. As you work with our producers and potential applicants, it is important to be generally aware of the programs and services our agency provides in (insert State name).</p> <p>Some of the topics we will cover include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Office Structure (County Executive Directors, Farm Loan Managers) • County Committees and Election Outreach • Enrolling Your Farm With FSA • FSA Guide to Farm Loan Programs • OASDVFR Loans • Outreach Initiatives (Know Your Farmer, USDA Minority Farm Register) • Sharing Our Successes (Your Role in Reporting Outreach successes) • Partnership Agreement. <p>We would like to also hear from you to become familiar with your organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Coverage area (which counties do you serve) • Staff and Contact information. <p>As we share the same goals in creating a more sustainable rural America, we look forward to creating a productive partnership with you.</p> <p>Please contact (insert SOC name), State Outreach Coordinator, (insert name), to confirm our proposed date and time of: (insert date, time).</p> <p>SED Name</p> <p>Title</p>
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Annual Informational Sessions Report

Following is the informational sessions and/or trainings with grant recipients report. SED's shall sign, scan, and submit the report electronically to DAFO at fsaoutreach@wdc.usda.gov.

Select Grant Type:

- OASDVFR Grant
 - Beginning Farmer/Rancher Development Grant
 - Other_____.
- Insert Grant Title

State Name:

SED Signature:

Date:

1. Were the grant-receiving CBO's, who were provided information earlier this year, **existing partners** in your State? If so, please list them and how long they have been FSA partners.
2. As an existing partner, what services has the CBO offered and/or provided to FSA, if any? List any collaborative activities conducted with the partner in the past 2 years.
3. How does FSA fit into each listed CBO's project work? (Example: their project involves assisting with FSA loan applications, they provide financial training to the underserved; they provide conservation technical assistance?)
4. Does any of the CBO's advise the FSA County or State Offices of FSA assistance they have provided to local producers? If so, how are you notified? (Examples: CBO brings applicants to the office; receive an annual report, e-mail, telephone call?)
5. Prior to the CBO becoming a grant recipient, did your State provide annual **training** to the CBO's or any other partners who receive USDA funding to provide **technical assistance** to producers and borrowers?
6. Is FSA information provided to the partner on a regular basis? If so, by what method? (e-mail, mailed, hand-delivered)
7. Have the CBO's been provided, at the least, the Agency's State web address, a listing of offices and county outreach coordinators in the counties covered by their project? If not, please explain.
8. What topics and programs were covered in your informational meeting(s) with the grant recipient CBO's?
9. Were you unable to meet with any of these organizations in 2015? If so please list their names and provide an explanation why.
10. Do the USDA 1890 and 1994 Program Liaisons in your State (as applicable) notify the State Office when CBO's receive USDA funding?